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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ; SERBIA

IRAQ

11. "Diplomacy's last days"

The conservative National Post opined (3/14):
"...Barring some blockbuster discovery by the inspectors, or an over-the-top sabre-rattling gesture from Saddam, the United States and Britain have little chance of convincing their opponents on the Security Council to explicitly sign off on an invasion - and it is only a matter of days before they give up the UN procedure entirely. Given the stubborn pacifism of France et al., such exasperation is understandable. Still, Washington and London should make every effort to bring the matter up for a vote at the Security Council - even in a losing cause. If they can get the minimum nine votes needed to pass the resolution, either the French or Russians will be forced to block it by exercising their veto power. It will then be clear to all who is responsible for the United Nations' slide into irrelevance."

12. "Bush, Blair must give Iraq time"

The liberal Toronto Star editorialized (3/14): "It's amateur hour at the United Nations. If this is Friday, U.S. President George Bush must be pounding home his view that Saddam Hussein is 'evil' and needs to be whacked. Or that he threatens New York with horror weapons. Or that he's gearing to hammer Israel. Or that he's thumbing his nose at the U.N. Security Council. It's getting hard to keep track of Bush's restless rationales for war.... Rarely have American and British leaders looked so misguided, so ineffectual and so isolated. Meanwhile, Saddam sits in Baghdad, gloating. This is what comes of trying to bamboozle, bully and bribe an otherwise united Security Council into a wrongheaded, needlessly rushed war.... Yes, Saddam is a dangerous criminal who must be denied nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Security Council resolution 1441, passed unanimously last Nov. 8, demands that. But it doesn't mandate what Bush really wants: Saddam's ouster. Nor does it require Iraq disarm by Sunday, as Bush has demanded. And for good reason. Saddam has been held in check for 12 years. He does not seriously threaten the United States, Britain or any other country. He can be contained.... Making war on Iraq must be a last resort. It could cost \$100 billion, result in tens of thousands of deaths and create new recruits for terror. That's a high price to pay for Saddam's head. Especially if Baghdad can be disarmed within weeks if the Security Council remains united and presses its demands. But it's amateur hour. This farce isn't over yet."

13. "UN must authorize war:"

In a CBC Radio commentary (3/12), international affairs columnist for the leading Globe and Mail Marcus Gee reflected that, "However the Iraq crisis turns out, one good thing has already come out of it. Everybody is talking about the United Nations. Suddenly, the U.N. matters. Everybody on both sides of the Iraq debate agrees on that.... Saddam Hussein has tried for 12-years to get weapons of mass destruction, making his country an international pariah, putting his people through years of sanctions and allied bombing, and foregoing tens of billions of dollars in oil revenue.... An Iraq armed with weapons of mass destruction, and bent on vengeance for its defeat in the Gulf War, would present a risk not just to its neighbours, but to the whole world. But have all means short of war been tried? Again the answer has to be yes. We've had 12-years of diplomacy and sanctions and every other kind of non-military pressure. None of it has worked. The anti-war camp wants more inspections. But inspectors will never uncover Saddam's weapons if he does not want to give them up. And once the threat of war comes off, Saddam will simply stop co-operating again. The United Nations Security Council has passed 17- resolutions demanding Iraq's immediate disarmament. This week it's likely to vote on an 18th. This time it must make sure its words mean something. If it misses this chance to show it can confront real threats to the world, the United States and other big powers will

simply ignore it next time and the institution will become a global non-entity."

SERBIA

14. "Serb hope shot dead"

The centrist Winnipeg Free Press commented (3/14):

"...Since the fall of Mr. Milosevic, Serbs have been politically apathetic. Twice they have failed to turn out in democratic elections in sufficient numbers to elect a president. Serbia now has an acting president, an acting prime minister, an acute political crisis - and a challenge to ensure that the good that Zoran Djindjic accomplished is not interred with his bones, that his dream of a free, democratic, prosperous Serbia does not die with him."

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